

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION EUR-12

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S E C R E T BRUSSELS 16482

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MPOL, NATO, MILI, BE
SUBJECT: SECRETARY'S LETTER TO SIMONET ON DEFENSE
ISSUES

REF: A) STATE 215736, B) USNATO 7872, C) STATE 217764

1. WE GAVE SECRETARY'S LETTER (AS REVISED IN
ACCORDANCE WITH REFS B AND C) TO SIMONET'S DEPUTY
CHEF DE CABINET, ANDRE ONKELINX, AUGUST 29 FOR
TRANSMITTAL TO SIMONET WHEN LATTER RETURNS FROM
VACATION LATER THIS WEEK.

2. AFTER READING LETTER, ONKELINX, WHO IS TAKING
UP NEW DUTIES IN SEPTEMBER AS DEPUTY BELGIAN PERMREP
AT NATO, MADE FOLLOWING INFORMAL COMMENTS. SAYING
THAT HE HAD BEEN PRESENT WHEN SECRETARY MET WITH
SIMONET IN MAY, HE RECALLED THAT SIMONET HAD SAID
"WE WILL TRY TO DO OUR BEST" WHEN SECRETARY
RAISED SUBJECTS OF AWACS, HAWK, AND COLLOCATION.
HE ALSO RECALLED THAT SIMONET HAD SAID IT WOULD BE
MUCH BETTER NOT TO RAISE COLLOCATION FORMALLY AT
THIS TIME AS TO DO SO WOULD MEAN CONFRONTING BELGIAN
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DECISION-MAKING AND POLITICAL PROCESS WITH TOO
MANY PROBLEMS AT SAME TIME. IN REPLY, WE REFERRED
HIM TO POINT (MADE IN SECRETARY'S LETTER) THAT
DEFERRING POSITIVE DECISION WOULD SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASE
COSTS.

3. ONKELINX THEN BRIEFLY REPEATED FAMILIAR BELGIAN

POINTS CONCERNING THE PROBLEMS, PRIMARILY POLITICAL, THAT COLLOCATION PROPOSAL POSES. ANY MOVE TO INCREASE NATO'S PRESENCE IN THE SMALL TERRITORY THAT COMPRISES BELGIUM OBVIOUSLY WILL HAVE TO BE STUDIED, HE SAID, VERY CAREFULLY. BELGIUM'S ACCEPTANCE OF NATO HEADQUARTERS IN 1967 CAME ONLY AFTER A VERY DIFFICULT DEBATE. AMONG THE SOCIALISTS (WHO ARE NOW AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE GOVERNING COALITION), ONLY SPAAK AND ONE OTHER SOCIALIST HAD VOTED IN FAVOR, AND THE DEBATE OVER NATO HAD ULTIMATELY LED TO SPAAK'S LEAVING THE SOCIALIST PARTY. NATO IS NOW MORE ACCEPTABLE TO BELGIAN PUBLIC OPINION THEN IT WAS IN THE PAST, FOR EXAMPLE DURING THE EARLY DETENTE PERIOD, BUT TO OPEN DEBATES ON NEW HEADQUARTERS FACILITIES AT THIS TIME WOULD CAUSE DIFFICULT POLITICAL PROBLEMS, AND THESE PROBLEMS WOULD HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE OTHER DEFENSE ISSUES CURRENTLY UNDER CONSIDERATION.

4. WE ALSO INFORMED ONKELINX THAT GENERAL HAIG HAS REQUESTED THAT NO FINAL DECISION BE MADE BY THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT ON COLLOCATION UNTIL HE HAS HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO PROVIDE IT WITH A BRIEFING ON COLLOCATION AND ITS IMPORTANCE TO THE ALLIANCE, AND TOLD HIM THAT GENERAL HAIG'S OFFICE WILL BE IN TOUCH WITH GENERAL CREKILLIE IN THIS REGARD. CHAMBERS

SECRET

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